Dr. TENISON's

# SERMON

CONCERNING

## Doing Good to Posterity.

Preached before

Their MAJESTIES.

PRINTED,

By Their Majesties Special Command.

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CONCERNING

## Doing Good to Posterity.

PREACH'D before

THEIR MAJESTIES

AT

*WHITE-HALL*,

On *February* 16. 16$\frac{8}{9}$.

BY

*THOMAS TENISON*, D.D.

Chaplain in Ordinary to Their MAJESTIES.

*LONDON*:

Printed for **Richard Chiſwell**, at the *Roſe* and *Crown* in St. *Paul's Church-Yard*. MDCXC.

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# A SERMON CONCERNING Doing Good to Poſterity.

PSALM LXXVIII. 5, 6.

*V.* 5.--- *He eſtabliſhed a Teſtimony in Jacob, and appointed a Law in Iſrael, which he commanded our Forefathers, That they ſhould make them known to their Children.*

*V.* 6. *That the Generations to come might know Them, even the Children which ſhould be born, who ſhould ariſe and declare them to their Children.*

THE Title of *Benefactor* does principally belong to thoſe who are at preſent uſeful, and likewiſe oblige Poſterity.

Such a one was King *David*, who Serv'd his own Generation very Faithfully; and having finiſh'd his Courſe, delivered his *Lamp* to the ſucceeding Age. Of this, as many are convinced, as either read the Hiſtory of his Life, or peruſe his *Pſalms* with Application of Mind.

And it was his care, amongſt his other Pious Deſigns, to continue the *Memory* of God's Wonderful Works from *Age* to *Age*; to the end that the Conſideration of his Power and Goodneſs might effectually move them to obey his Laws. Of ſuch Remembrances they ſtood in great need, being apt no longer to think upon the Miracles of Divine Mercy, than whilſt they ſaw them.

Deut. 4. 9. Wherefore God himſelf preſcribed this way of teaching his Statutes, and rehearſing the Hiſtory of his Mighty Acts, (and eſpecially thoſe at *Horeb*) to *their Sons*, and their *Sons Sons*.

And

And that the *Israelites* might not err in the repetition, he caus'd those Statutes and Wonders to be written down; not leaving them to the uncertainty of Oral Tradition, which sometimes either passeth by things of moment, or delivers them down very imperfectly; and too often brings it to pass, that the Legends of one Age, become History in those that follow.

*God establish'd a Testimony in Jacob, and appointed a Law in Israel, which he commanded our Fore-fathers, That they should make them known to their children.*

*That the Generations to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children.*

The *Argument* of **Doing Good to Posterity**, being set forth in these words, not by any *General Precept*, but only by the *especial Instance* of propagating the

the Knowledge of his Law; I ſhall uſe them rather as the *Occaſion*, than the *Ground* of this Propoſition,

'That a Good Man, according to 'his Talent and Circumſtance, 'does endeavour in ſuch man-'ner to *Do good* in *his* time, that 'the *next* Age alſo may proba-'bly reap the benefit of it.

Concerning this kind of *Charity*, I purpoſe to conſider,

1. *How fit and juſt a thing it is to put it in Practice.*

2. *That, notwithſtanding its fitneſs, there is too general a diſuſe of It.*

3. *Whence it comes to paſs that there is ſo Common a failure in ſo neceſſary a Duty.*

4. *By what means the Exerciſe of it may be made more regular, and more frequent among us; that ſo the ages to come may have juſt cauſe to Bleſs Almighty God for*

*for the advantages derived to them from this Generation.*

1. Now, *Firſt of all*, the *doing of Good to Poſterity*, may appear a fit and reaſonable Practice;

1. From a common Rule of Good and Evil.

2. From the Obligation which man is under, to imitate God.

3. From the *Gratitude* we owe to *former* Ages.

1. This is a *Common Rule* concerning *Good*, not only that it is to be done, but that we are to do what, *upon the whole matter*, is the *greateſt good* which we are capable of doing in our Sphere and Condition. Now Good is increaſed as well by the *Duration* of Benefits, as by their *Magnitude* and *Number*; ſo that if the Good be equal in other reſpects, he that does the Charity that laſts *but a day*, does well, but he that does the Good that laſts *ſome years*, does ſtill better. He who out

of good will, gives a cup of cold water to a thirsty man, performs a Charitable Office; but that Person is, by much, the greater Benefactor, who opens a *Fountain* which from time to time may give refreshment to Man and Beast. Wherefore by the Reasons and Proportions of *Good*, a man is requir'd, according to his ability, to look beyond the term of his own few and uncertain days, known only to God how few they are.

He is,

2. Required to *benefit Posterity*, that he may be a Follower of God in True Religion, which is the *imitation* of Him whom we worship. And by doing Charities which may last, we are made, in some measure like to Him; for all Generations partake of the Goodness of God.

He so framed the Material World at the beginning, that by the same Order of Nature (the same for the main) it might in its several Ages conveniently subsist, and the same *Sun* that shone on *Adam*, enlightens us.

God

God permitted men in the *first* Age of the World, to live very many Years, that by their Experience (especially in the Courses of the Stars, which required length of time for observation) the *following* Ages might receive *useful* Instruction; *useful*, not only in secular Affairs, but in Religion; the *Heavens*, the *more they are understood, declaring the more the Glory of God.*

*He* ordained the *Sabbath*, the *Passover*, the *Sacrament* of the Lords Supper, not merely for the men of any *one* Age, but as *Memorials* of the *Creation*, of the *Deliverance* out of *Egypt*, of the meritorious *Passion* of our Redeemer, for many Generations.

He sent his Blessed Son *once* to offer a Sacrifice, whose Virtue might be communicated to all true Christians, as long as there should be a Church on Earth.

He caused Holy *Scriptures* to be written for the good of all following times; and the things which were written of old, were written for our Admonition, upon

whom the *ends of the world are come.* For inſtance; we are commanded to *Remember the wife of Lot*, who, ſo many Years ago, (looking *back towards Sodom*) was turn'd into a Pillar of *Salt* and *Sulphur* *, being puniſh'd in the ſame extraordinary way with thoſe unclean Sinners who remained in it.

* Gen. 19. 25, 26. S. Luke 17. 32. Deut. 29. 23.

3. There is not a fitter expreſſion of our *gratitude to former Ages*, than a hearty endeavour to procure advantage to thoſe who come after us, as we have received benefit by thoſe who went before us; borrowing Light from their Light, and living upon the Effects of their Benevolence. If nothing had been done for us, in how miſerable an Eſtate ſhould we have come into the World, and lived in it? Much more miſerably than *Adam*, who in the ſtate of Innocence, enjoy'd the Earth, without the Curſe which Diſobedience brought upon it. If all Arts, and Sciences, and Buildings, and other ſuch Helps and Conveniences of *Humane Life*, were to be invented and begun with

every Age, how rude, how mean would the condition of it be? How heavily would it be preſſed with the burden of Neceſſity? How much more painful and laborious would this render the Pilgrimage of man, which as it is, with all its advantages, has ſtill its ſufficient ſhare of trouble? In what darkneſs had we ſate in reference to the means of our Redemption, if it had not pleaſed the God of Wiſdom, through the hands of the Chriſtians of former Centuries, to deliver down to us the Holy Bible?

It does therefore well become us to have a ſenſe of the Favours of thoſe who died before our times, but ſtill live in their benefits; and gratefully to celebrate their juſt Praiſe, and to have a perpetual inclination, when we have not further power, to *go, and to do likewiſe.*

But as *fit* and *juſt* as this *Practice* is, there ſeems to be

2. *Too general a diſuſe of it.* Some are careful even to Anxiety, but they ſhow that the ſolicitude is for *their ſelves*, by their

their backwardnes in disposing of any thing, so much as by a WILL. Some let *Receits* and *Inventions* dye with them, by which great numbers in succeeding Ages might have been profited. Some are not provident for *their selves*, and therefore not likely to take due care for Posterity. They will not put a *stone* into a decaying Building, or drop an *acorn* into the Ground for the sake of those that shall follow them; much less have they a zeal for the supporting of Gods Church in difficult times, or the planting of true Religion in places that want the blessing of it: Insomuch that when they give up their wretched lives (as give them up they must, what averson soever they have to it) they appear as a Place surrendred after a long and tedious Siege, where little remains, besides dead Corpses, Rubbish, and Ruins.

And this puts me in mind of still a *worser sort of men*, who by their *inhumanity*, make such desolations in their times, as late Posterity can scarce repair. Their Ta-

Talent lies not in promoting *Truth*, and *Holy Worship*, but in forcing Error and Idolatry; not in Building and Planting, but in plucking up and destroying. They are imitators of *Apollyon* the God of this World, whose *Delight* is Miſchief, whose Triumphs are Barbarities. Fire and Sword are the Inſtruments of their *Glory*: They ſpare neither the *Bodies* of the Living, nor the *Monuments* of the Dead. They lay waſte in a few Hours, ſtrong and beautiful Cities, which were the fruit of the Arts and Labours of former Times. One would think they would anticipate Doomſday it ſelf, if their Force were equal to their Pride and Malice: Though that ſort of men, of all others in the World, have the leaſt reaſon to haſten the Day of Judgement: When their Acts ſhall be rehearſed before the *Children that are yet unborn*, they will riſe up with juſt indignation, and call their Memories accurſed.

If (as we have propoſed in the *third place*),

3. We

3. We enquire into the Cauſes of this Uncharitableneſs, we ſhall without much difficulty, find them amongſt the *ill Principles* and diſorderly *Luſts* and *Paſſions* and *Humours* of unreaſonable men. As for example;

The *Atheiſtical*, if they follow the conſequences of their Opinion, terminate their *Deſigns*, as they imagine they do their humane *Beings*, in *this Life*.

Thoſe who live by *Senſe*, whoſe Objects are *preſent*, have no regard for ſuch as they ſhall never live to *ſee*; for ſuch as are not capable of returning them immediate thanks, of making them Preſents, of pleaſing them with flatteries, of rendring them ſuch ſervices as are moſt grateful to fleſh and blood.

The *ſlothful* will not be at the pains to build or to uphold, to manure or cultivate, to catechiſe a Child, or inſtruct a Servant, or diſcreetly to reprove an irregular Neighbour: They will let their *own Vineyards* be over-run, in their own times, with Briars and Thorns.

The

The *Careless* and *Voluptuous* are contented to think (if thinking be at any time the exercise of such Affectors of Ease) that Peace and Plenty will last for their Days; and that is all the Eternity they care for; though by such neglect, Ruin often comes down upon their Heads before their term of Life is expired. So it commonly happens to the *Prodigal* who inspect not their Affairs, and believe their Fortune to be *sufficient for their Time*; and in that Imagination, say to their Souls, *Take your Ease*; and dream on till they are surpriz'd by Poverty: And, if their loose and swift way of living permits them to number many Years; there remain to them the fewest Supplies in *that Age* which has the most and greatest needs, the Age of *Labour and Sorrow*.

*Furthermore*,

The *Ill-natur'd* hate the rest of the World, and are not pleased that the state of it should be bettered by them. Out of

the abundance of such an ill Heart came that worst of Sayings pronounced by one of the Brutal Heathens, *When I leave the World, let Earth and Fire mingle*; or, let the Frame of Nature be immediately dissolv'd. He would have forborn those wicked Words, if he had but just thought of that more dreadful Fire which Divine Justice has prepared for the Uncharitable.

*Moreover*, the *Proud* and the *Designing*, who are themselves ignorant, will on purpose deny a liberal Education to those Children who are under their Conduct, lest they grow too wise and sensible for them.

From the same *Passion* it is, that Wicked Men endeavour to hinder both present and future Good, by depressing generous and worthy Persons, giving them occasion to complain, with that great Warrior *Belisarius*; "It was not a "*Crime* that hurt us, but *Envy*.

Like-

*Likewiſe*, the *Covetous* either ſtifle the *Wills* of the Charitable, or forbear to fulfill them; converting that to their own uſe, which was piouſly intended for others.

*Alſo*, the *Malicious* ſtudy on purpoſe to leave *That which muſt go to others*, in a ruinous Condition. It may be, without a Houſe for ſhelter, or a Tree for ſhade, or a Field not worn out with perpetual bearing, or a Paper for Direction, and for the determination of Strife; much more without a Prayer for the Proſperity of thoſe who ſhall come after them.

*Again*, of ſome Men of revengeful Diſpoſitions, it has been ſaid, That on their very *Death-Beds*, [a ſolemn Time in which nothing ſhould ſupplant the Love of God and Man; when their abundant Charity ſhould, through Chriſt, prepare their Way to the *Mercy* of God, before whom they are ſuddenly to ap-

pear] that, being engaged in vexatious Suits and Quarrels with others, they have given it in charge to the Heirs of their Families, to keep up the Grudg, and to continue the Controversy from Generation to Generation.

*Finally*, Where this Evil Temper abounds, it entails Trouble and Confusion: For it requires little skill to unfix and embroil, but a great deal to establish. May That (as we hope, and as we pray) be, for the future, the *Wisdom* of this Age, to the end that it may flourish in True Religion, in Unity, in Plenty, Peace and Health, and by that means become a Blessing to these *Lands* for ever.

These Evil *Principles*, *Lusts*, *Passions*, and *Humours* which I have mentioned, are the *Causes of the Decay* of that generous Charity so beneficial to the Ages to come.

But,

But, *Fourthly*,

Let us not follow the inordinate Affections and unreasonable Customs of the Men of this World, but be prevailed with to imitate *David*; or rather, the God of *David*, who hath a Blessing for every Age: and who, when he rested from the *Work of Creation*, did not forbear the Works of *Providence*.

To this purpose,

*First*, That we may be capable of practising this sort of Charity, the forementioned *Passions* are to be subdu'd by pious Consideration, by Prayer for the especial Grace of God, by firm and steadfast Resolution, by Conversation with Christians whose Hearts are enlarged, by reading the holy Scriptures, and in them, the History of God's Power and Goodness.

*Secondly*, being thus made capable of doing present and future Good; that we may do it as we ought, the *Good-Will*, the right *Scope*, the *Decence*, the *Justice* of it, are well to be weighed.

And,

And, *First*, *Good-Will* ought to be the Spring which moves Men that benefit those who succeed them; for it is no Vertue to *leave that behind us*, which Death will not permit us to *carry away*. *Dives laid up Goods for many years*, and he left them to Others, without being to them a Benefactor; for, *he laid them up for himself*, upon a vain and presumptuous supposition of long Life; in which he was miserably disappointed, by the surprizing Justice of that Righteous God, who said to Him, *Thou Fool! this Night thy Soul shall be taken from thee.*

*Again*, This *Good-Will* is to be directed to a *right* and profitable *Scope*; that Charity may not be blinded by *Superstition*, which hath founded many *Societies*, and left great Revenues, and enriched many *Shrines*, to the *hurt of Posterity*, by promoting the Honour of false Deities and Saints; and by encouraging a Worship from Age to Age, in which the True God can take no pleasure.

There

There is *alſo* to be obſerved, in this Practice, a *Decency*, which forbids a Man to be ſeverely *Penurious* all his days, for *the doing a greater Good at the laſt.* It is true, He is not to be condemned for cutting off unneceſſary Pomps and Expences in order to ſo good an End: And he may be bold with himſelf. But, though theſe may be a *laudable Frugality*, there muſt not be a *ſordidneſs* in his Self-denial.

*Add to this*, That *Juſtice*, as well as *Decency*, becomes all Men who piouſly deſign to be Benefactors to Poſterity. They are not to do Evil that Good may come of it; or, to be unjuſt, Oppreſſors, Extortioners in one Age, that they may be bountiful to another. Yet, ſuch is the manner of the Covetous, who love not Mankind, nor their very Off-ſpring as Men, but in the Quality of their ſecond-ſelves: They run the hazard even of Damnation, for the gleaning of thoſe, who generally ſpend with vicious profuſeneſs all that Wealth which, with ſuch guilt

guilt of Conscience they had gathered together.

*Thirdly*, Having found out such *Rules* as these for the governing of our Practice, we may render our selves more fit for the discharge of so Excellent a Duty.

*First*, By removing certain Discouragements.

*Secondly*, By attending to some further Motives.

The *Discouragements* are of *Two* Kinds.

1. *Suspicions* of *Ability* to do such good.

2. *Hindrances* of *Willingness* in Those who are able to do it; and in some of them who are not ill inclined.

1. Men of *inferiour condition* suspect their *Ability*; imagining, that he who would become a Benefactor, must be arm'd with great Power and Authority, indued with high degrees of Wisdom, and furnished with such heaps of growing Wealth, as may supply Charity, without sensible Diminution.

Whereas,

whereas there are divers waies by which Persons, in meaner Circumstances, may, in *their Age*, be useful both to *that* and the *next*. A poor Man, as we read in *Ecclesiastes*, did by his prudent Counsel deliver a City. And that Place had, probably, the Benefit of his good Advice a long Time after; though whilst his Wisdom made him considerable, his Poverty exposed him to the Scorn and Neglect of the Proud and Ungrateful. There are true Benefactors in the World besides such who have Ability to make *Publick Waies*, to repair *Breaches* of the Sea, to calm that which is as tumultuous, the Rage of the People; to build Houses for God's Worship, to found Colledges and Hospitals, to subdue publick Enemies, and to enact wholsom Laws, which are the Nerves of Society, and by the strength of which we a while (by God's Blessing) subsisted, though Popish Superstition did so furiously assault us. Many may communicate to their

Neighbours a wholsom *Medicine*; though they cannot erect a House for the Sick, and Wounded, and Impotent. Every Master of a Family in *Israel*, was obliged to shew his Children the Reason of the *Paschal Feast*, and to teach them the Law of God. Those, therefore, were not Performances out of their Power, for then they would not have been their Duty. And as Christians their great Master saith, What excellent things do ye? What do ye *more than others*? Much Good they may do by rehearsing the Holy History of God's Law and his wonderful Works before others, that they may learn it, and transmit it to the next Generation. Much Good they may do by teaching of necessary Doctrines to Youth, and by forming the Manners of those who are likely to survive them. They may instil into them betimes such Christian Principles as may grow up with them, and *bring forth Fruit in their Age*. He who hath a small por-

portion of Silver or Gold, may yet be ſometimes capable of leaving behind him a more valuable Legacy: By giving the World a *Book of Piety*, ſuch as that of the *Whole Duty of Man*, by which the judicious and modeſt Author hath done a greater Good to thoſe who lived in and after his Time, than if he had poured forth other Riches upon them in overflowing meaſure.

Moſt are capable of doing a durable Charity by good *Example*, which may operate when they are dead and gone. To how many Generations has the Inſtance of the Patience of afflicted *Job* adminiſtred Courage and Support, whilſt they have called it to Remembrance in the Time of their Trouble? And there is great need of *virtuous Example* for the ballancing of that which is *Bad*; the Contagion of which ſticks like Leproſie in Families, Churches and Kingdoms. *Jeroboam* the Son of *Nebat* made *Iſrael* to ſin [to commit that great Sin of Idolatry, by worſhip- 1 King. 14. 16.

ping the true God by an Image] both in *his Time*, and after he was gone to answer both for his own and for other Men's Sins. But what Answer could he make for either? Either was a Burthen too heavy for him to bear.

Then, *for the Charity of Prayer*, who is there that cannot call on God for a Blessing on Persons and Families, on Churches and States, after they shall have left this unquiet Stage, and that *Scheme of the World which passeth away*.

Exod. 20. 5, 6. C. 34. 7. Deut. 7. 9.

In sum, all *Wicked Men*, as wicked, are hurtful, and all *Good Men*, as good, are beneficial both at present and for the future. Blessing and Cursing pursue Families very often according to the Righteousness or Impiety of the first Heads of them.

Secondly, There are *Discouragements* which hinder Men, who are able, to do Good to other Generations, from being *Willing*. That is to say, The

Instance

Inſtance of *Backwardneſs* in Public Managers to *reward* thoſe who have undone themſelves by ſome *uſeful Invention*, which generally ruines the firſt *Projectors*, whilſt Poſterity reaps the fruit of their Wit, Labour, and Expence. Alſo the Inſtances of *Failures* and *Frauds* in *Truſt*, of ſmothered or abuſed *Legacies*, of the converting of that to the uſe of the Rich, which is bequeathed to the Poor; together with the Conſideration of the *uncertainty of Times*, in which, by Wars and tumultuous Violences, the Effects of Publick Charity do often periſh.

There is much Truth in this *Objection*, but yet not ſo much as makes it *unanſwerable*. *Uſeful Inventions* are often greater Charities than could have been done by the Pains and Wealth which they coſt. *Frauds* and *Abuſes* do not alwaies happen: They do not alwaies come; and *no to them*, not who are injur'd by them, but *by whom they come*.

And

And the Obſervation of ſuch accidental Miſcarriages ſhould, indeed, *increaſe the Caution*, but not prevent the Charity of wealthy Men. It is, alſo, profitable for us to remember, That whatſoever Hazards *Good Works run*, the Soul that has done them in Chriſtian Manner, ſhall be ſafe in the Hands of their Mediator. Chriſtians know in whom they have believed, and how able he is to keep that which is committed to *his Truſt* to *that Day*.

For the *Uncertainty* of *Times* and *Seaſons*, that's an Objection againſt doing Good in all Ages; for Heaven only is *a Kingdom which cannot be ſhaken*.

Wherefore, laying aſide theſe Impediments, caſt in our Way by too great a Degree of Jealouſie, let us,

Secondly, Provoke our ſelves to Piety and to Good Works, by laying before our Thoughts ſuch further *Motives* as theſe.

The

The *Firſt* may be taken from the *true pleaſure* which is found in all *good Acts*, and particularly of thoſe of that kind of which we have been ſpeaking. *Pleaſure* naturally ſprings up in the Mind, when we think of any thing we much value, as *continuing* and *proſpering*. A great degree of happineſs conſiſts in *hope*, and in hope cheriſhed by *proceeding*. The Mind is *damp'd* when it is *ſtinted*, and when it ſees an end of any thing in which it took content. And if pleaſure is derived to us from the growth and progreſs even of our humbleſt *Plants*, much more ſhall we be pleaſed by the extent of our goodneſs to Chriſtian Men, and in the duration of it. It is a bleſſed and comfortable Thought, that God will vouchſafe to uſe ſuch frail earthen Veſſels, as Inſtruments of *good*; by Inſtruction, by Example, by Prayers, by Alms, not only for the Span of our Life, but *for many years to come*. It was a ſtrong Conſolation

to

to *Abraham*, that in his Off-ſpring all the *Nations of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed.*

The *Second Motive* may be taken from *Honour*, which is *Fame* acquired by doing of *worthy things*. After this Men ſo naturally thirſt, that ſome have affected the Name of Ευεργέτης, or *Benefactors* who have turn'd their Power into Oppreſſion; for of that number (as *Philo* ſhews us) was *Caius Caligula*. They underſtood what was venerable, but they did not purſue it.

Luke 22. 25. ὁ σωτὴρ καὶ εὐεργέτης ἐκλήθη, &c.

Even the *Charity* which is *tranſient*, is honourable; and the Woman who with her Spikenard *anointed our Saviour to his burial*, is to this day honourably remembred wherefoever the Hiſtory of the Goſpel is read. And if to *tranſient good* our Praiſe is due, certainly to that which is *laſting* it ought not to be denied. Wherefore the *Holy Virgin*, conſidering the Salvation of the World by Chriſt, whoſe Mother ſhe was become through God's

God's ſpecial favour, believed not her *Magnificat* to be a vain-glorious *Hymn*, but ſaid with humble Joy, *God hath regarded the lowlineſs of his Hand-maiden; for behold from henceforth all Generations ſhall call me bleſſed.*

But the *greateſt Motives* of all are, *Conſcience*, which requireth us to *do good*, as our Chriſtian Duty.

*Religious Fear*, which ſets before the *Unprofitable* (the unprofitable to Men, for God we cannot profit) the *Terrors* of the *great Day*. And, laſt of all,

*Religious Hope*, which moves us to be uſeful, in all our Capacities, whilſt time laſts, upon the moſt comfortable proſpect of an Eternal Recompence.

O the bleſſed Day, when thoſe *who abound in the work of the Lord Jeſus*, ſhall find *their labour not to be in vain in*

*the* same *Lord*. When the penitent, pious, and righteous, shall behold the general Assembly of those *great Souls* who neither *liv'd nor dy'd to themselves*. May God prepare us for this Felicity, by Faith, and Repentance, and Good Works, through him who was both the *desire* and the *blessing of all Nations*, *Jesus Christ the Righteous*, to whom with the *Father* and the *Holy Ghost* be all Honour and Glory, World without end, *Amen*.

*FINIS.*

## *Books lately Printed for* Richard Chiſwell.

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